



# School Honors Slain Soldier

By Martin C. Evans  
STAFF WRITER

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They had seen him off only three years ago - parents, teachers and staff at Brentwood High School - with commencement day wishes for a bright future.



Yesterday, many of the same people gathered again for a Veterans Day ceremony in the school auditorium, but this time, to mark his death.

They came to remember Raheen Heigher, a square-jawed varsity football player who graduated with the Class of 2000, joined the Army, and was killed in an ambush July 24 in the Iraqi desert north of Al Hawd.

"He was a good kid," said Mary DiMarzo, who has seen 10 senior classes come and go in her years as a hall monitor.

"It's sad to see them die so young," she said, dabbing away tears from her reddened eyes.

Heigher, 22, who lived in North Bay Shore, attended Brentwood High School for grades 10-12.

Heigher, who served a tour in Korea before he was shipped to Iraq last spring, was a member of the 2/230th Field Artillery of the 101st Airborne Division when he was killed.

The memorial service drew about 300 people, including U.S. Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington). Israel told the audience Heigher had made a "noble decision" when he joined the Army.

His death has shaken members of the Brentwood staff, many of whom take the plight of their students as a personal challenge. Many students in the district come from lower-income, immigrant or single-parent homes, and face hardships that teachers help struggle to overcome.

Children who respond positively warm the hearts of some teachers. Betty Greene, a former teacher who had Heigher in her eighth-grade home economics class, said Heigher was one of them.

She recounted an instance she believes helped shape Heigher into a respectful and tractable child.

Heighter had gotten into a bit of trouble, and Greene had called his mother, Cathy Heighter. Not only did she make it her business to come to school, she followed her son from class to class, sitting in and observing his behavior.

"Where he went, she went," said Greene, now a dean at the high school. "She even sat at his table during lunch period."

"That was the quietest lunch period we'd ever had, because children don't want to mess with someone's mother," Greene said. "And after that, there were no more problems with Raheen."

On the auditorium stage, behind the podium where Greene was speaking, Cathy Heighter smiled. "I like when she tells that story," she said later. "Because it's so true."

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